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Hurlburt Field's Jeff Elliott (2) and West Florida's Jason Lill go after the ball on Friday afternoon at Etheredge Stadium. The match was videotaped by Eglin Multimedia and will be sent to troops deployed in the Middle East.

Salute to the troops

■ Hurlburt, UWF squads play a friendly game to be shown on tape to soldiers in war zone.

By RON SEIBEL

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Matt Estrem didn't need much time to reacquaint himself with Etheredge Stadium's narrow, worn-out spring field.

Estrem, a junior on West Florida's soccer team and a former Daily News boys soccer Player of the Year from his days at Choctawhatchee, dished off to Jason Lill for a goal less than a minute into the Argonauts' 2-0 exhibition victory Friday over Hurlburt Field's base team.

"I was kind of looking for-

ward to this when I heard we were going to get a chance to play here," said Estrem, who once held Choctaw's single-season scoring record before Chris Chilcott topped it in 2002. "It was nice to come back and try to help out any way we can."

Scheduled as part of UWF's spring practice season, the match was staged to honor troops deployed to the Middle East. It will eventually be broadcast to those stationed overseas, courtesy of Eglin Multimedia.

According to Hurlburt player/coach Yuhon Joseph, about half of the base's 30 competitive soccer players are deployed.

For those in the field, just seeing the tape will be a positive, even though Hurlburt's Air Commandos did not record a shot on goal.

"This was pretty special," said Joseph, who hails from the U.S. Virgin Islands. "We had a larger than usual turnout of players. We enjoyed it. We played a good game."

"Obviously, the other team has played together a lot longer. We split up due to TDYs, deployments and stuff. This is about getting a group of guys together and relaxing."

Friday's match was a family affair in more ways than one. Estrem's father was in the Persian Gulf during the first Gulf War, and UWF teammate Jon Hargis' father is currently deployed as part of the Army reserves.

"I know what it was like when he went away for the Gulf War," said Estrem of his father's experience. "Anything that we can do to help out,

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From C1

that's what this program is about."

Ironically, a member of Hurlburt's team has a UWF tie. Kim Rogers was recruited by current UWF women's coach Joe Bartlinski when Bartlinski was at Brevard College.

Bartlinski did the play-by-play for the tape that will be sent overseas.

"It was very weird to come across seeing him here after spending two years in the Air Force," Rogers said. "I planned on going to college and playing ball, but it didn't work out that way."

As for the match itself, all the scoring was done early. Stevie Simmons beat Hurlburt keeper Shawn Robinson in the 13th minute for the Argonauts' second goal.

The Argonauts recorded 12 shots, edging the Hurlburt squad in corner kicks 4-3.

The most important thing, however, was that those involved with the military were able to videotape 90 minutes' worth of American fun and games to show those serving in the war zone.

"We support them," Joseph said. "A lot of our guys from our base are over there. We're behind them, and we hope that they get back safe."